(b) This question has been under discussion at the United Nations for several years. There are several complex issues involved: the size of an expanded Council, criteria, balanced representations, etc. With regard to these issues, there is a certain commonality between the non aligned countries and developing countries including China. Discussions are continuing in the UN involving all these countries.

Exploitation of Indian labourers in Iraq

964. SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY:
SHRI DATTA MEGHE:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a number of Indian labourers and other workers are held captive and exploited in Iraq;

(b) if so, since when and what are the details in this regard;

(c) the action taken by Government to rescue the strangled Indian workers; and

(d) the reason for the delayed response to the crisis?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) It has come to Government's notice in recent months that a number of Indian nationals are employed in various places in Iraq. Their number is estimated to be around 5000. Enquiries by Indian Missions in Iraq and Kuwait have indicated that such persons are employed by companies who have got contracts from the US Government. Enquiries by our Missions indicate that there are no known captives among them. A small number of workers who complained of exploitation was assisted by our Mission in returning to India.

(c) and (d) Whenever cases of stranded Indian workers in Iraq came to the attention of the Government, our Missions in Iraq and its neighbouring countries established contact with the employers and the Indian workers and arranged for their repatriation to India. Delays in repatriation in some cases were due to the prevailing security situation and time involved in obtaining transit visas for Indian workers from the neighbouring countries.